IRREVOCABLE.

Once on a time I spoke a word
That was bitter of meaning and harsh of tone,
And it went as straight as a poisoned dart
To the very core of a true friend's heart,
And the beautiful page of our love was blurred
Forevermore by that word alone.

Once on a time I cast a sneer
At the small mistake of one I knew,
And his soul, discouraged, let slip the rope
That anchored it to the shore of hope,
And drifted out on a sea of fear,
To waves of failure and winds untrue.

Once on a time I whispered a tale
Tainted with malice, and far and near
It flew, to cast on a spotless name
The upas shade of a hinted shame,
And wherever it reached it left a trail
Across the promise of many a year.

Never that word could be unsaid
That lost me a friendship old and true—
Never that sneer might be undone
That broke the trust of an erring one—
Never untold the tale that sped
To blight and baffle a lifetime through.
—L. M. Montgomery, in Congregationalist.

CHAPTER XIV.

GEORGE OF AMBOISE.

I should mention that before retiring I had obtained from the landlord a good-sized lanthorn, which I had carefully filled with oil and trimmed under my own eyes. Holding this in my hand I ascended the ladder leading to the chamber, or rather loft, I was to occupy, and on gaining my point I placed it on the floor, near the opening by which the ladder led into the room, and so directed the light that its glare passed downwards, and up to the entrance of the stables, leaving the sides of the stables in darkness, although my own room was bright enough. This was a precautionary measure, as it would discover anyone attempting to come in by the stable entrance, which had no door, and would enable me at any time to see to rush down quickly to the aid of Jacopo, should he need it. I debated a short while as to whether I should undress for the night; but so little did I like the looks of the place, which was more like a house of call for bravos than anything I had seen, that I did nothing beyond removing my boots, and flinging myself as I was on the vile truckle-bed in the room. I placed my drawn sword at my side and sought to sleep, struggling resolutely to get this, desipte the legions of inhabitants the bed contained, who with one accord sallied forth to feast upon me. But sleep I was determined to have, as I had work for to-morrow, and, knowing Jacopo to own sharp eyes and quick ears, felt no scruple about getting my rest, determining, however, to make it up the next day to my knave for his vigil, which I was sure would be faithfully kept. Finally, despite the attacks of my enemies, I dropped off into a light slumber, which lasted for two or three hours, when I was startled by hearing a shrill whistle, the clash of swords, the kicking and plunging of the horses, and Jacopo's voice shouting out my name. I woke up at once, with all my wits about me, and on the instant ran down the ladder, sword in hand, parrying more by accident than design a cut that was made at me by some one as I descended.

As I touched the ground two men darted out of the door and ran across the half-ruined yard in front of the stables. A third, whom I recognized as Jacopo, was about to follow, but I held him back by the shoulder, having no mind to run risks around dark corners whilst I had my letter to deliver. Jacopo yielded to me very unwillingly, and in an answer to my hurried inquiry gave me an account of the affair which had been as brief as it was noisy.

"When your worship retired," said he, "leaving the lanthorn to so conveniently light up the stable entrance, I had another look at the horses, and then settled myself down on that heap of straw yonder, my back to the wall and my sword in my right hand. So an hour, or may be two passed, and then I heard voices outside, and some one swearing at the light. Oh ho! says I to myself, there's a night-hawk about, and I remained on the alert, not thinking it worth while to give tongue then. After awhile the voices dropped away—and, excellency, I am sorry, but I must have slipped off into a doze, and beshrew me! if I did not dream I was aboard that cursed ship again, and being made to play pea-in-the-drum once more. I therefore made haste to awaken, and as I opened my eyes heard a crackling noise outside. I rose slowly and crept towards the entrance, and just as I reached within three feet of it a handful of pebbles was thrown in, and one of the horses started a bit. The stones were clearly flung from outside to see if anyone was awake; but, of course, I made no sign, and the next minute two men appeared at the open entrance. I gave a whistle to rouse your honor, and went at them at once—and your excellency knows the rest."

In the morning my henchman was anxious to know if I meant to take any steps with regard to the attempt at robbery last night. I was well enough inclined, but determined to let the matter rest until my business was done, and for the present said I would remain content with the satisfaction that we had saved our steeds and throats. By the time I finished breakfast, Jacopo, who had already taken a meal, had saddled the horses and was holding them ready for our departure. I summoned mine host, but at first could obtain no view of him. Finally on my threat to depart without settling my score he appeared with his arm bound up in a sling. As he was unwounded the evening before, I made no doubt but that he was one of the two who had visited us last night, but said nothing, merely remarking, as I paid my account, that the love of horseflesh frequently brought people into trouble. He did not seem to appreciate the remark, and scowled at me, at which I bade him begone, and to thank his stars that his house was not pulled about his ears. He did not attempt any reply, but slunk off, and, inwardly resolving to clear out this nest of scorpions from Rome at the first chance, I rode out of the gate, followed by Jacopo, and we directed our way towards the Ponte S. Angelo. I had not the least idea where his eminence of Rouen was staying, but made certain it would be somewhere in the Borgo, and that once I had reached the papal quarter I should find no difficulty in my search for D'Amboise and in delivering to him Machiavelli's letter.

As I went on I began to feel nervous, in spite of myself, as to what the results of my interview with the cardinal would be, and whether it would end in the further employment, which the secretary had distinctly said it would. I had no reason to doubt, however, and it was with a hopeful mind that I trotted up the Lungo Tavere.

Near the statues of Peter and Paul, on the bridge, was a guardhouse, occupied at the time by a detachment of Spanish infantry, and to these men I addressed myself inquiring where the cardinal of Rouen was staying. I was told, at once, that his eminence was lodging in the new palace of Cardinal Corneto, opposite the Scorsa Cavalli, and that my best way was to turn to the left on crossing the bridge, and then to the right at the junction of the Borgo San Spirito and the Borgo San Michele.

Bestowing my thanks and a largesse on the men for their kindness, I went on at a gallop, congratulating myself on the ease with which the difficulty was solved, and in a few minutes had crossed the Piazza Scorsa Cavalli, and was before the residence of the cardinal. At the time I speak of it was not quite finished, but still habitable, and had been rented by Monsignore d'Amboise, as being conveniently near the Vatican.

On entering the courtyard I dismounted, and, giving my horse to Jacopo to hold, ascended the steps and boldly announced myself as an urgent messenger who had business with his eminence. I was ushered by a page into a reception-room, and, early as the hour was, there were a considerable number of people already in attendance, awaiting the morning levee. Here I was left to cool my heels for a little time, the spruce page informing me that the cardinal was engaged at breakfast, but that he would tell him of my coming, and asked my name. I hesitated for a moment, but decided to keep the name of Donati which I had assumed, and gave that, adding that I was the bearer of an urgent dispatch to the cardinal, which I must deliver with my own hands. The young man then left me, as I have said, and, taking a good position near the entrance door to the adjoining room, I leaned back against the wall and awaited my summons. The reception-room was of noble proportions, oblong in shape, the ceiling being supported by two pillars of veined marble, which, although they diminished the size of the chamber, had a good effect. The marble flooring, arranged in a patchwork of black and white, was bare of all furniture, and, as the room gradually filled, the constant moving of feet, the sound of which rang sharply on the stone, made it appear as if a lot of masons' hammers were at work. I let my eyes wander over the groups as they stood or moved about, wondering if by chance I should see anyone I knew; but they were all strangers to me, mostly Frenchmen, with a fair sprinkling of priests amongst them. They were one and all trying to jostle past each other, so as to gain as close a position as possible to the entrance door, near to which I stood; and as I watched this with some little amusement I heard a whisper in my ear, and, glancing round, beheld a man standing near me in a doctor's robe, holding a heavily-bound missal in his hand. I saw in a moment it was Corte, and he whispered in a low voice:

"Do not look round at present, but near the pillar to your right are two men, one dressed half in cloth of gold, and they are more interested in you than you think. I overheard a snatch of conversation—they are moving this way. By your leave, signore," raising his voice, he attempted to push by me, and, catching the hint his last words had thrown out, I answered, loudly: "First come, first served, learned doctor, and you must bide your turn."

"I am a man of peace, and therefore yield." Corte moved off, and I was free to look around me. I saw that Corte's little piece of acting, to which I had risen, was due to the fact that the man in the cloth of gold and his companion were edging nearer to us, and at the time were barely six feet off. Resting my hand lightly on the hilt of my sword I looked the two full in the face, but could make nothing of them. The one who wore a jerkin of gold cloth met my look for an instant, and then dropped his eyes, a faint flush rising to his cheek. I saw that he was a young man of a singularly handsome countenance. A short, neatly-curled mustache fell over his upper lip and mouth, but there was no sign of a beard on the small and rounded chin, which was cleanly shaven. On his right cheek he wore a black patch, placed as if to hide the scar of a wound, although his complexion was as delicate as if the sun had never touched it. In his ears he wore earrings, an affectation of female adornment hateful to me, and the fingers of his small right hand, which he held ungloved, were covered with rings. The hilt of his rapier, too, peeping from under the folds of his gay cloak, was crested with jewels, and altogether it seemed as if I could have nothing to fear from this painted lily, who looked more fitted to thrum a lute in a lady's bower than have aught to do with the stir of the times. I therefore loosed my glance from him with some contempt and turned to his companion, who was robed as an abbe, and evidently in a sour middle age. His features were bolder than those of his companion, but distinctly those of the canaille, and there was nothing in them in any way remarkable.

Nevertheless, I thought it well to be on the watch, knowing that a dagger thrust is easily sent home, and there was the certainty, too, that the fact of my coming to Rome with a letter was known to the Medici plotters in Florence, and evidently it was their object to frustrate its delivery. What puzzled me, however, was that the look the young man directed to me was not unfriendly, and it struck me that if I could only hear his voice it might give me some clew to a recognition. The two had come a little between me and the door, and I was just about to contest the place with a view of forcing their hands if possible, when the door was flung open and the same page who had taken my name appeared and called out:

"Signor Donati, his eminence awaits you."

As the door opened there was a general movement towards it. But the cry of the page in a moment arrested the crowd, turning the look of anticipation on the faces of all to one of disappointment, and a loud murmuring arose against my being so favored. I lost not a second in stepping forward, and in doing so purposely brushed against the young man near to me, turning round as I did so with a somewhat brusque "By your leave, sir." I fully expected that he would resent my rudeness and make some speech, but he merely bowed his head with a courteous inclination, showing a set of small and even teeth as he smiled under his blond mustache. I was a little put out by the failure of my plan, but the next instant the door closed behind me, and at any rate the letter to the cardinal was safe, and my task was as good as accomplished.

I followed the page, therefore, with an equal mind, and, lifting a curtain, which fell in heavy folds at the end of the passage, where a couple of gorgeous lackeys stood, he called out "Messer Donati," and then stepped aside to let me pass. I entered the room with a firm step and saw before me a large, but plainly-furnished apartment. In a lounge chair near a small table, on which was set out a light repast, was a man whom I at once guessed to be the cardinal. He wore a purple robe, and the barettina or small skull cap, which covered the tonsure on his head, allowed his short gray hair, which curled naturally, to be seen around it. Under the cap I saw a square, resolute face with keen black eyes, and a full but kindly mouth. He was just putting down a glass of vernaccia as I came in, and I caught the purple glitter of the sapphire ring he wore in token of his rank, as he set down the glass. He was not alone, for, leaning against the window and caressing the head of an enormous wolf-hound, was a splendidly-dressed cavalier, who looked up as I came in, and I saw at once it was Bayard. I kept my eyes away from him, however, and advancing straight towards the cardinal placed the letter before him without a word.

D'Amboise looked at the seals carefully, and then taking a small jade-hilted knife from the table ripped open the envelope and ran his eye quickly over the letter. As he did so not a muscle of his face moved to show how the contents stirred him, and when he had finished he held it out at arm's length, saying:

"My dear Bayard, what do you think of this?"

Bayard made a step forward to take the letter, and in doing this our eyes met, and he frankly held out his hand. I could hardly believe it when I saw it extended towards me. My breath came thick and fast, and the whole room swam around. The man was the soul of honor, the noblest knight in Christendom; he had seen my trial, nay, he had been one of my judges, and he offered me his hand! He must hold me guiltless, I felt. "My lord!" I rather gasped than spoke as I took his grasp, but, seeing my emotion, he put in:

"Sit down, cavaliere. His eminence will forgive me for disposing of a seat in his house—we are more than old friends." He placed his hand on my shoulder and forced me to a seat, whilst D'Amboise, still holding the letter in his hand, looked at us with a puzzled air.

"St. Dennis!" he exclaimed. "What does this mean, Bayard?"

"It means, your eminence, that this is a gallant gentleman who has been most basely used; but pardon me—the letter."

He took the letter from the cardinal's hands and read it quickly, whilst I sat still, with emotions in my heart I cannot describe, and D'Amboise glanced from one to another with a half-amused, half-curious look on his keen face. Bayard finished his perusal in a few seconds, and, laying the letter on the table, said: "Nothing could be better. We should be prepared for action, although there is yet plenty of time. I wonder how in the world the Florentine got wind of this?"

"Oh, he has long ears. We shall, however, want a good sword, and if all that the secretary writes is true we have got it in your friend the Cavaliere Donati. In fact, Machiavelli suggests him for the task."

"My name, your eminence, is not Donati," I here put in, "but Savelli. When misfortune overtook me I changed my name; but I see no reason for hiding the truth from you."

"Quite right," said D'Amboise, "but Savelli! Is this the Savelli of the Arezzo affair, Bayard?"

Bayard nodded assent, and the cardinal continued, turning to me. "Then, sir, I have heard your story, and you have more friends than you think. But of this, later on. Were you not at Fornovo?"

"Yes," I replied, wondering what the cardinal's speech meant.

"Ciel! I made out your patent of St. Lazare myself. What could have made Tremouille act as he did I do not know, and he is as obstinate as a mule. Bayard, I know all about this gentleman, and your testimony to his worth convinces me that what I have heard is correct. I could never believe the story myself."

I placed the letter before him without a word

"My lords, you may doubt; but the world—"

"Will yet come round to you, cavaliere," said Bayard, and added: "Your eminence could not have a better sword for your purpose than that of M. di Savelli here, provided he will accept the task."

"I will accept anything from you, my lords," I said.

"Good," said D'Amboise, "now let me tell you how you stand. Acting doubtless on the advice of friends, Mme d'Entrangues wrote to me a full account of the affair, which ended so badly for you, and explained fully her husband's treachery. This she begged me to forward to Tremouille with a view of getting your sentence altered. As you have just been made aware, I have some knowledge of you, and it was a thousand pities to see a sword, which had served France well, turned away. I laid the matter before the duke, but he replied to say he could take no action. The duchess, who is my cousin, has also used her influence, but to no purpose, for Tremouille stirs his porridge with his own hand, and does not care it it burn or not, as long as he stirs it himself. We could get the king's pardon for you, and as a last resource that might be done, for I like as little to be thwarted as His Grace of Tremouille; but that will raise you up a strong enemy in the duke, and it will not kill the story—you see."

"I do, your eminence. How can I thank you?"

"I do not want your thanks, cavaliere; but France wants your sword. Your only way is to do a signal service for France, and after this the matter is easy. Tremouille is generous, and it would want but a little pressure to make him rescind his sentence apparently of his own accord, provided you could do what I have said. Strange how fate works!"

I remained silent, and D'Amboise went on: "Such a service it is possible for you to do, and I will put it in your way. I cannot at present give you details, as they have to be discussed with the secretary, who will shortly be in Rome. This much, however, I can tell you; get together a few good men, you doubtless can lay your hands on them, and be ready. You will no doubt want funds, but they will be arranged for. In the meantime you may consider yourself as attached to my suite—a moment," he continued, as I was about to pour out my thanks, "you had better for the present call yourself Donati. I know something of the history of Roman families, and your name would not smell well to the Chigi and Colonna, and remember the Tiber is very deep."

He touched a small handbell as he concluded, and the page appeared. "Defaure," he said, "send the Abbe Le Clere and my gentlemen to me; after that you will please inform the steward that apartments are to be prepared at once for M. Donati, who is here." The page bowed and vanished, and, as I rose to await the coming of the suite, the cardinal went on with a smile: "Messieurs in the anteroom are doubtless getting impatient; we must make haste to receive them." As he said these words a gray-haired priest entered, bearing on a cushion the scarlet hat of a prince of the church, and following him half a dozen gentlemen and grooms of the chamber. The cardinal rose, and, leaning on the arm of Bayard, walked slowly towards the door. Le Clerc bore the hat immediately before him, and the rest of us formed a queue behind. As we came to the door it was flung open by two lackeys in a blue and silver livery, who shouted out:

"My Lord Cardinal—way—way."

We passed into the room where the people were arranged in two rows, and D'Amboise walked down the line, bowing to one, exchanging a word or two with another, until he came opposite Corte. The doctor dropped to his knee, and, presenting his book, solicited the cardinal's influence to obtain from him an audience with the pope, to whom he desired to dedicate his work.

"Perte!" said the cardinal. "Why not go to his eminence of Strigonia—books are more in his line than—well, we shall see—we shall see."

He passed on, and the next group that caught his eye was that of the young stranger in the cloth of gold and his companion.

As the cardinal approached, the young man drew a letter from his vest and presented it with a low bow.

D'Amboise tore it open and glanced over the contents. "Diable!" he exclaimed, "from Mme. de la Tremouille herself. See here, Bayard, the duchess writes, introducing her friend the Chevaliere St. Armande—I know not the house."

"We are of Picardy, your eminence."

The voice was singularly sweet and soft, and a strange and undefinable resemblance in its tones to some other voice I had heard struck me, but I could not fix upon anything.

"The duchess says you are anxious to serve; would it not have been easier to send you to the duke?"

St. Armande looked round with a heightened color, and then replied, speaking in the same low, soft tones:

"If your eminence will kindly read the letter you will perceive that my desire was to see something of the court of Rome before joining the duke."

D'Amboise glanced at the letter again, and an odd smile passed over his face.

"I see," he added, "the postscript—My dear chevalier, Mme. de la Tremoille's requests are commands to me. If you will do me the honor of joining my suite I shall be delighted. Permit me to introduce you to the Cavaliere Donati, who is also a new friend."

I bowed and extended my hand, and St. Armande placed his within mine. It was small and delicate as a woman's, and as I clasped it for a moment it felt as chill and cold as death.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

MUSIC OF THE SIERRAS.

The Quiet Explorer of the Mountains Hears Plenty of Nature's Melody.

Travelers in the Sierra forests usually complain of their want of life, especially of birds. "The trees," they say, "are fine, but the empty stillness is deadly; there are no animals to be seen, no birds. We have not heard a song in all the woods." And no wonder, going in large parties with mules and horses, making so much noise, dressed in outlandish, unnatural colors, every animal shuns them. Even the frightened pines would run away if they could. But Nature lovers, devout, silent, open-eyed, alert, looking and listening with love, sitting still here and there for hours or days, as their genius directs, find no lack of inhabitants in these mountain mansions, and they come to them gladly. Not to mention the large animals or the small insect people, every waterfall has its ouzel, and every tree its squirrel, or tamias, or bird—tiny nuthatch threading the furrows of the bark, cheerily whispering to itself as it deftly pries off loose scales and examines the curled edges of lichens, of Clarke crow, or jay, examining the cones or some singer oriole, tanager, warbler, resting, feeding ,attending to domestic affairs. Hawks and eagles sail overhead and grouse walk in happy flocks below, and the song sparrow sings in every bed of chaparral. There is no crowding, to be sure. Unlike the low eastern trees, those of the Sierra in the main forest belt average nearly 200 feet in height, and of course many birds are required to make much of a show in them, and many voices to fill them. Nevertheless, the whole range from foothills to snowy summits is shaken into song every summer, and though low and thin in winter, the music never ceases.—John Muir, in Atlantic.

American Gems.

American precious stones are of more importance than is generally known to those not connected with the trade. The Maine tourmalines are unequaled in color, the lithia emerald of North Carolina has never been found in any other country, and the beryls of Connecticut are of a fine golden yellow. California chrysoprase resembles the apple-green Chinese jadeite, a beautiful rose quartz comes from South Dakota, and a large quantity of rough Montana saphires is sent to London to be cut. The main part of the world's supply of turquoises is obtained in New Mexico. No donbt the new possessions will add to the American production of gems, a business as yet in its infancy.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

True, But Awful.

First Newspaper Reader (in smoking compartment)—I hear they have nearly reached those poor miners who were entombed by that explosion.

Second Newspaper Reader—Yes, they have ha'pennytrated the wall of rock.

Third Newspaper Reader—You mean penetrated.

Second Newspaper Reader—No, I don't. They're only half way through.—Ally Sloper.

A Metamorphosis.

Jack—Miss Ramsey is getting gray.

Dick—Now she will be blue.

Jack—O, no; now she will be blond.—Town Topics.

RAILROAD TIME CARD.

L. & N. R. R.

ARRIVAL OF TRAINS:

From Cincinnati—10:58 a. m.; 5:38 p. m.; 10:10 p. m.
From Lexington—5:11 a. m.; 7:45 a. m.; 3:33 p. m.; 6:27 p. m.
From Richmond—5:05 a. m.; 7:40 a. m.; 3:38 p. m.
From Maysville—7:42 a. m.; 8:25 p. m.

DEPARTURE OF TRAINS:

To Cincinnati—3:15 a. m.; 7:51 a. m.; 3:40 p. m.
To Lexington—7:47 a. m.; 11:05 a. m.; 5:45 p. m.; 10:14 p. m.
To Richmond—11:08 a. m.; 5:48 p. m.; 10:16 p. m.
To Maysville—7:50 a. m.; 6:35 p. m.

F. B. CARR, Agent.